

**SUMMARY OF THE  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
AUGUST 7, 2001**

The Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, August 7, 2001, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss PT reporting limits and revised field of proficiency testing tables, uniform electronic reporting formats, analyte groups, formation of a permanent subcommittee of technical experts on PT, standard operating procedures, PT issues for feedback from stakeholders, and current National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)/EPA issues.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Ms. Burmeister began the meeting by reviewing the minutes from the committee's July 17, 2001 teleconference. The committee approved the minutes with no additional changes. The status of the Action Items is as follows:

- Ms. Burmeister deleted questionable text from the June 19, 2001 minutes and distributed them to the committee for review, comments, and approval. The committee had no further changes and the minutes were approved.
- Ms. Cindy Nettrour will contact Mr. Chuck Wibby about feedback regarding the PT reporting limits and field of proficiency testing tables and to plan another subcommittee meeting. (Ms. Nettrour was not available to comment on this item today. The action item will be forwarded to the next meeting.)
- Dr. Mike Miller will raise the following topics in the Accrediting Authority Workgroup meeting: uniform electronic formats, PT studies for Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)-Water analytes, and handling organic analyte corrective action studies if the failed analyte is not present. (Dr. Miller was not available to comment on this item today. The action item will be forwarded to the next meeting.)
- Ms. Burmeister emailed the final analyte codes to the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) Accrediting Authorities, PT Providers, Ms. Jeanne Hankins, Dr. Ray Wesselman, and Ms. Reenie Parris. The analyte codes have been posted on the NELAC website.
- Ms. Burmeister emailed Ms. RaeAnn Haynes about organizing a teleconference for the Analyte Groups Subcommittee.
- Ms. Burmeister emailed Ms. Silky Labie to check on the status regarding the formation of a subcommittee of technical experts on proficiency testing. This will be discussed further below.
- Ms. Burmeister responded to comments received from Bob Rucinski. She has not yet responded to S.M. Roberts.

- Dr. Miller will review data collected from New Jersey laboratories to study the problem with calibration ranges compared to low-end ranges of the PT acceptance limits. (Dr. Miller was not available for comment. The action item will be forwarded to the next meeting.)

#### **PT REPORTING LIMITS AND REVISED FIELD OF PROFICIENCY TESTING TABLES**

Ms. Cindy Nettrour was not able to attend this meeting to report on the subcommittee's activities. However, Ms. Burmeister informed the committee that Ms. Nettrour plans to schedule a subcommittee meeting for either this week or early next week.

#### **UNIFORM ELECTRONIC REPORTING FORMAT**

Ms. RaeAnn Haynes, speaking as an accrediting authority, said that because there are no uniform submission requirements for laboratories, tracking PT results is the hardest thing they do. Ms. Burmeister said that Dr. Miller was going to broach the subject with the Accrediting Authority Workgroup in their next meeting. Since Dr. Miller is currently unavailable, Ms. Burmeister said that she will request to attend one of their future meetings and have this issue put on their agenda.

#### **ANALYTE GROUPS SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT**

Ms. Haynes said that Dr. Anand Mudambi and Dr. Ralph Obenauf have discussed developing several analyte groups for organics. She will assemble the draft analyte groups, incorporating their input, and send it to the subcommittee for review. Then, she will submit the draft analyte groups to the PT Committee for discussion during the next committee teleconference.

#### **FORMATION OF PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF TECHNICAL EXPERTS**

Ms. Burmeister told the committee that she had sent a letter recommending the formation of a permanent subcommittee of technical experts on proficiency testing to Ms. Silky Labie for discussion at the NELAC Board of Directors (BoD) July 12, 2001 teleconference. The topic was deferred until the BoD's August 9, 2001 teleconference. Ms. Burmeister said that she will keep the committee posted on any updates.

#### **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP) SUBCOMMITTEE STATUS**

Ms. Burmeister informed the committee members that the draft SOPs will not be ready until the committee's next teleconference.

#### **PT ISSUES FOR FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDERS**

Ms. Marykay Steinman said that she has been invited by EPA Region 3 to speak to state and EPA people about NELAP, concerning what to do to get ready for accreditation. Ms. Steinman told committee members that she would also like to use this opportunity to get some feedback from participants about PT issues. She asked for input from the committee about what questions to ask the participants.

One committee member recommended that Ms. Steinman ask whether the participants would agree to adopt the standard method and analyte codes which were developed by the PT Committee. Also, she should ask for input regarding a uniform electronic format for accrediting authorities. No other recommendations were made at this time. Ms. Steinman asked the committee to send any other ideas to her by email.

#### **COMMENTS/QUESTIONS RECEIVED**

Ms. Burmeister reported that no new comments had been received. However, the comments received from Dr. Tom McAninch (about concentration ranges) will continue to be discussed by the PT Reporting Limits subcommittee.

#### **MEMBERSHIP AND OUTREACH COMMITTEE UPDATE**

There were no updates from the Membership and Outreach Committee.

#### **EPA/NIST ITEMS**

##### **Annual NIST/EPA PT Meeting**

Ms. Burmeister informed committee members that she will be attending the WTQA 2001 meeting and the First Annual NIST/EPA PT Meeting held August 13-16, 2001, in Arlington, VA. She will be giving presentations on the technical aspects of the NELAC PT Program.

##### **EPA Database**

Ms. Burmeister read to the committee a memorandum to Mr. Ray Wesselman (EPA NERL) from Mr. Greg Carroll (EPA OGWDW). The memo discussed the Office of Water's decision to discontinue the operation of the EPA database. Ms. Burmeister told the committee that she had spoken to Ms. Jeanne Hankins and said that NELAC needs to pursue a PT database. A letter will go out from the NELAC Board of Directors, rather than from the PT Committee. Ms. Burmeister said that she will be invited to participate in an upcoming BoD meeting to discuss the topic.

##### **NIST Direct Testing of PT Providers**

On July 31, 2001, Dr. Obenauf informed the committee by email about a recent announcement by NIST for direct proficiency testing of PT providers. He said that all PT providers are to receive NIST PT's which they must run within two weeks (results are to be returned within 30 days thereafter). The PT providers are to pay \$16,000 for organic/inorganic or \$9,000 for just the organic or inorganic analytes. This announcement was unexpected and has caused a furor among PT providers.

Ms. Burmeister had responded by informing the committee that both direct and indirect proficiency testing has always been a requirement of the NIST/NVLAP Chemical Calibration - Providers of Proficiency Testing Program. She said that the specifics are found in NVLAP Handbook 150-19, Section 285.22(b) and Appendix D - Procedures for Testing the Proficiency

of Providers. NVLAP has the option to use either direct or indirect PT to assess the performance of PT providers. This must be the first time they are enforcing the direct PT requirement.

In today's teleconference, Dr. Obenauf continued the discussion saying that while PTs are required of providers, the standards do not specify whether the PTs are to be direct or indirect. He said that the NIST PT providers knew they would have to do PTs, but the announcement by NIST for direct testing with a 2-week notice was a surprise and could have been handled better. Dr. Obenauf also discussed the fees associated with the direct testing, saying that the high cost may force some PT providers to rethink their NIST accreditation. The PT providers have not had the opportunity to budget for the direct testing. The Chemical Reference Materials Manufacturers Association (CMMRA) has voiced their position to NIST, but they have no power to do anything. Dr. Obenauf said that he knows of no responses from NIST as of yet. Ms. Burmeister said that this issue will most likely be discussed at the EPA/NIST PT Provider's meeting next week.

## **CONCLUSION**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. EDT. The committee's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 28, 2001 via teleconference.

**ACTION ITEMS**  
**PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**AUGUST 7, 2001**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
<i><b>Items from 7/17/01 teleconference</b></i>		
1.	Ms. Cindy Nettrour will contact Mr. Chuck Wibby about feedback regarding the PT reporting limits and field of proficiency testing tables and to plan another subcommittee meeting.	
2.	Dr. Mike Miller will raise the following topics in the Accrediting Authority Workgroup meeting: uniform electronic formats, PT studies for RCRA-Water analytes, and handling organic analyte corrective action studies if the failed analyte is not present.	
3.	Dr. Miller will review data collected from New Jersey laboratories to study the problem with calibration ranges compared to low-end ranges of the PT acceptance limits.	
4.	Ms. Burmeister will respond to comments received from S.M. Roberts.	
<i><b>Items from 8/7/01 teleconference</b></i>		
5.	Ms. RaeAnn Haynes will assemble the draft analyte groups, send it to the subcommittee for review, and then send it to the committee for discussion at the next teleconference.	
6.	Ms. Burmeister will request to be included on the agenda for the a future NELAP AA workgroup meeting to discuss uniform electronic reporting formats.	

**PARTICIPANTS  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
AUGUST 7, 2001**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Address</b>
Burmeister, Barbara     Chair	Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene	T: (608)265-1100 F: (608)265-1114 E: burmie@mail.slh.wisc.edu
Griggs, John (absent)	USEPA/OAR	T: (334)270-3450 F: (334)270-3454 E: griggs.john@epa.gov
Haynes, RaeAnn	State of Oregon DEQ	T: (503)229-5983 F: (503)229-6924 E: haynes.raeann@deq.state.or.us
Jackson, Larry	Environmental Quality Management	T: (603)924-6852 F: (603)924-6346 E: lpjackson@msn.com
McAninch, Tom	Eastman Chemical Company	T: (903)237-5473 F: (903)237-6395 E: twmcan@eastman.com
Miller, Michael (absent, Paula Blaze standing in)	NJ DEP - Lab Certification Office of QA	T: (609)633-2804 F: (609)777-1774 E: mmiller1@dep.state.nj.us
Mudambi, Anand	US Army Corps of Engineers	T: (703)603-8796 F: (703)603-9112 E: mudambi.anand@epa.gov
Nettrour, Cindy (absent)	American Water Works Services Co., Inc.	T: (618)239-0516 F: (618)235-6349 E: cnettrou@bellevillelab.com
Obenauf, Ralph	SPEX CertiPrep, Inc.	T: (732)549-7144 F: (732)603-9647 E: robenauf@spexcsp.com
Steinman, Marykay	M.J. Reider Associates, Inc.	T: (610)374-5129 F: (610)374-7234 E: msteinman@mjreider.com
Lloyd, Jennifer (contractor support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919)541-5942 F: (919)541-8830 E: jml@rti.org